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7 January 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: 7 January Meeting of the "Indochina Steering Group"

25X1A 1. Neither [REDACTED] nor [REDACTED] was in attendance. 25X1A

25X1A 2. [REDACTED] gave a rundown of the situation in Laos. The Ban Ban operation is coming to a close. Gradual "spoiling and exfiltrating" is taking place. The withdrawal is expected to be a walkout rather than to involve an airlift. In south Laos plans for operation [REDACTED] 25X1A [REDACTED] are being worked out. This will involve a four-battalion striking force to interdict enemy supply operations along Routes 925 and 928 south of Muong Nuon. The operation is to be preceded by ARC LITE strikes. The situation in the south in the Bolovens Plateau area is getting nowhere. General Cushman is intent upon changing the strategy in the south by giving up the defensive PS sites and developing a capability in Pak Se from which to launch disruptive strikes against the enemy. Such a strategy has political overtones and will have to be discussed with Souvanna Phouma who might read it as a giving up of the Bolovens area.

3. An ONE officer said that the draft of the NIE on South Vietnam over the next five years will be ready for circulation sometime next week.

4. I reported that we have put an end-of-the-month deadline on a memo concerning the mood in Hanoi. I said we would concentrate on trying to assess the position Hanoi would like to be in in a year or so from now. I also reported on Attorney General Mitchell's request for information on force levels and order of battle in Vietnam.

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25X1A 5. [REDACTED] reported that OCI's two recent memos concerning Cambodia and Vietnam were extremely well received around town--particularly by SecDef.

25X1A 6. [REDACTED] said that the SecDef has directed that one squadron of US A-1 aircraft remain in Laos and that an F-4 squadron be pulled out instead. This is fine with the Agency which finds the A-1 better than the F-4 for close support. The USAF is not happy, however.

25X1A 7. There was an extended discussion of the infiltration problem. [REDACTED] noted the SecDef's staff request for a special annex to the PDB to assess the implications of the infiltration levels. [REDACTED] noted that a reading of fragmentary CIBs and a recent OER study don't help much in assessing what is going on and, more importantly, what dangers may lie ahead. It was agreed that the primary new thing about current infiltration is the Communist intent to guarantee their supplies in southern Laos. They also are seeking to recoup recent losses, and they are confronted with a new requirement for Cambodia. Infiltration numbers do not suggest an early major threat to SVN. It was also agreed that there is fairly good knowledge within the DDI about infiltration and its implications, but this is not at all well understood by outside consumers and planners. Hence, the PDB annex should be of great value. 25X1A

25X1A 8. [REDACTED] said that the SecDef intends to discuss the upcoming Presidential elections with Ambassador Bunker in Saigon.

25X1A 25X1C 9. [REDACTED] reported on a direct request made to him by [REDACTED] for whatever we might have indicating that the Chinese in fact played a larger role in Cambodia than we had thought (the request grew out of a discussion between [REDACTED] last October). [REDACTED] and the FE Division are working up a sterilized statement based on the latest OER memo on this subject. Before going ahead with passage to [REDACTED] intends to confer with the DDI. 25X1C 25X1A

10. As the meeting was breaking up, [REDACTED] asked to mention the continuing interest in beefing up order of battle and current military intelligence reporting from Cambodia. This is something [REDACTED] cannot agreeably

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take on. There is a proposal in town to send a larger
DAO shop into Cambodia. State is having some objection
to this. Nevertheless, an enhancement of the DAO facilities
is likely.

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Preliminary details are being discussed by FE Division and
[REDACTED] of the DDI staff.

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[REDACTED] 25X1A

Deputy Director of Current Intelligence

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